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ABSTRACT

Many of the theories about communicating effectively in corporate structures as well as the accompanying pedagogy do not pertain to changes in corporate structure and communication brought about by Total Quality Management (TQM). TQM creates a work environment in which employees need problem-solving skills and interpersonal skills that allow them to work well as part of a team. Team building enables employees to communicate, and "cross training" is a means of educating employees to provide varying levels of flexibility in the work environment. One way for students to understand teams is to consider the team processes of team charter, team functions, and team improvement. Students working together on classroom projects should use a charter to express in writing their core purpose and secondary purposes. Students need to discuss behavior standards that facilitate effective team functioning. Team improvement is a result of training, education, and development. Including "individual development plans" (a set of goals derived from job task requirements) as part of collaborative projects is a way to make sure that students participate in cross training and thus improve themselves and the functioning of the team. Learning about team building and cross training prepares students for the corporate environments they will encounter upon graduation. (Fifteen references, a list of the criteria for the Malcolm Baldridge National Quality award, a team master profile spider diagram, and a figure illustrating team processes are attached. (Contains 15 references.) (RS)

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Total Quality Management (Team Building and Cross Training): From Business to Academe and Back Again to Business

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Communicating in corporate environments has changed because, rather than being hierarchical, many organizational structures now tend to be flat with fewer levels of middle management. At the same time, management has been redefining its roles to implement total quality management, including a focus on team building and cross training. Management is concerned with empowering employees, setting up work cells, and piloting self-directed teams. As a consequence, TQM involves culture change, especially in the area of communication.

To accomplish its goals, management must build teams; they must create a desire in employees to communicate, as well as help employees learn how to communicate. Management must structure the work environment to allow for and encourage cross training. Team building enables employees to communicate, while cross training (which also involves communication) is a means of educating employees to increase their job capabilities and, thus, provide varying levels of flexibility in the work environment. Team building and cross training create self-sufficient work units, increasing production and profit, especially in areas where the product of one division's work is needed before other divisions can complete their work.

As a result of these changes in corporate structures and management focus, successful employees must be able to communicate in collaborative environments. However, many of the theories about communicating effectively in corporate structures as well as the accompanying pedagogy do not pertain to this type of environment.

These concepts from business can be transferred to academics in order to produce a more effective teaching environment and to prepare students to assume their roles as employees. Teachers must enable students to communicate effectively in non-hierarchical corporate environments, after these students have spent over sixteen years learning in an academic, hierarchical one. In order to provide such preparation, teachers can structure business communication classes so that students learn in "work cells" and in "self-directed teams," thus learning decision-making and interpersonal skills.

While the focus of such classes is not on the management theories per se, students learn about such concepts, but more importantly they learn how these theories influence communication

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processes and how communication can be improved. They learn how to function in environments based on those concepts.

In this paper, I briefly describe total quality management and its effect on the work environment; methods for building teams (even when monetary rewards are unavailable and when some members are not team-oriented); and procedures for implementing cross training (peer learning and role sharing that does not threaten personal job security for employees). In presenting the above information, I indicate (1) how current management theory can be applied in business communication courses and (2) how teachers can prepare students to function effectively whatever their roles in corporate life.

Total Quality Management (TQM)

According to David Edwards ("Total Quality Management in Higher Education"), the major components of TQM are a documented quality management system, statistical process control, and teamwork. One way to better understand TQM is to review the criteria for Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award; as Brown ("Developing a Plan to Win the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award") points out, "Each winner developed detailed plans for implementing total quality management (TQM) that enabled them to win the awards. The Baldrige criteria are simply a set of indexes by which implementation of TQM can be assessed."

The Baldrige Award consists of 7 categories, as indicated in Appendix 1. Human Resource Utilization, Category 4.0, is particularly relevant to academics preparing students to function effectively in current corporate cultures, especially to communicate successfully. This category focuses on the responsibility of companies to develop employees, enabling employees to realize their full potentials. Companies also need to maintain an environment conducive to employees participating fully and conducive to their personal growth. In a section about employee involvement, the criteria for the Baldrige Award call for employers to act "to increase employee authority to act (empowerment), [to increase employee] responsibility, and [to increase employee] innovation. Summarize principal goals for all categories of employees." Note that all employees are to be empowered, even the lowest on the hierarchy of authority. In addition, the criteria suggest that companies develop partnerships with educational institutions so employees can continually upgrade their skills; this partnership, furthermore, ensures that future employees will be adequately prepared. One skill emphasized is problem solving.

Thus, total quality management creates a work environment in which employees need problem-solving skills and interpersonal

skills that allow them to work well as part of a team. Employees must have the skills required for them to be empowered and, as a part of that empowerment, they must be able to continually learn the skills needed to adapt to whatever changes occur in the corporate environment.

Building Teams and Implementing Cross Training

As defined earlier, team building enables employees to communicate while cross training is a means of educating employees to provide varying levels of flexibility in the work environment. Team building fosters interdependence, and cross training produces independence.

Team building involves training to enable group members to function as a team -- learning skills, practicing, being able to perform all tasks (not necessarily being the best at all tasks), determining purposes and goals, learning and assuming roles within the team, delegating assignments and responsibilities, being accountable, and learning strategies (education to reach the next higher level).

Cross training involves being able to do more than one job, maximizing skills, gaining new skills, completing jobs other than the ones employee accustomed to performing as well as employees being multi-functional, valuable, and flexible. Cross training involves diversity.

The terminology used to describe team environments, evaluate their performance, and discuss team processes is as varied as the organizations implementing them.

Procter and Gamble, for example, describes a high performance work system as having the following elements:

1. Respect for the capability of all employees
2. Common objectives
3. Managing by principles
4. Results orientation and focus
5. Goal setting/problem solving
6. Team concept
7. Skill/contribution based rewards
8. Multi-skilled/total task concept
9. Informed people
10. Self-assessment and renewal

Team members for any company (including team members for a classroom collaborative project) should determine their own list so that they have ownership. Although lists developed by students may not be as detailed as the one above, these lists

provide a basis for deteriming whether their team is performing as it should be. Periodically (how often depends upon the magnitude of their collaboration), students should assess their team's performance, using their list. Often, a group encountering difficulties will discover that the team's performance is affected by failure concerning one of the elements; for example, a team member or several team members not respecting the capability of others on the team, or all team members not working toward the same objectives.

Wilson Learning measures how a group is performing with a Team Master Profile Spider Diagram that measures common purpose, shared vision, customer focus, trusting intentions, truthful communication, diversity, support, interdependence, accountability, and playing to win (see Appendix 2). Team members, whether they are part of a team in a corporate environment or in a classroom situation, should create their own audit systems to measure progress and opportunities for improvement. Students can discuss the audit systems they develop regularly to improve their group's performance. For example, to produce the best possible document as part of a business communications assignment, students on a team must communicate truthfully so all possible solutions and strategies are considered, not just those presented first or by the most outspoken team members. They must all be accountable, completing by their deadline and to the best of their abilities the tasks they have assumed responsibility for.

One way of understanding teams is to consider the team processes of team charter, team functions, and team improvement (see Appendix 3).

A team charter, at the heart of a functioning team, indicates the reason for the teams' existence although it also deals with behavioral issues. A team charter consists of a core purpose, team management, and behavior standards. A core purpose is best conveyed using a verb and a noun, thus expressing an action to be completed and what that action involves. The purpose should address the utility of the activity; for example, create labor saving devices (not make vacuum cleaners), provide financial services (not cash checks), and create potential (not teach children). A fill-in-the-blank charter can be used to indicate items such as the amount of time the team will be together and the boundaries of their responsibilities. Students working on classroom projects should express in writing both their core purpose and secondary purposes. Doing so helps them focus on "common objectives" and "results orientation and focus" (Procter and Gamble) as well as "common purpose" and "shared vision" (Team master Profile Spider Diagram).

With team management, individuals in the group agree upon roles. Employees assume roles that can rotate if team members

decide to do so. When roles are rotated, members know that if they aren't fair when scheduling, for example, someone else will have the opportunity to be unfair to them later on. The role of the advisor, facilitator, or whatever the new role of the supervisor is called must be clear. Teams must understand the bounds of team authority. Note that these bounds may extend as far as team members, management, and financial restraints allow these bounds to go. Student teams can also agree upon management roles; they may elect one student as leader or decide to have shared leadership. (For information about functional writing teams, peer writing teams, and supervised writing teams, see The Professional Writer by Alred, Oliu, and Brusaw.)

Some behavior standards, such as attendance and breaks, may be fairly well set, while others will evolve, such as the way group members speak to each other and treat each other. Team members should set expectations for the quality of their relationships. Students can benefit from classroom discussions concerning what behaviors foster successful team performance. Students, as employees in a corporate environment, would not miss work, or even be late, without immediately notifying their immediate supervisor; nonetheless, in a classroom situation, they will forget or just not attend group meetings, leaving team members to complete required work without them.

Students need to discuss behavior standards that facilitate effective team performance:

* Self-disclosure, or offering a limited amount of personal information to other group members, as a means of binding members of a team

* Trust that enables team members to freely share ideas

* Control not an issue (all team members accept whatever management structure is established by the team, whether it be peer management or supervised management or some other type)

* Positive perception of the team as a group, as a unit

* Congruence, so that what team members are feeling and experiencing is what they communicate to the group

* Use of positive language that focuses on the task, not the person completing the task

For additional information about collaboration, see Lay, "The Metaphor of the Web"; Lay, "Interpersonal Conflict"; Lay and Karis; Louth and Scott; and Bosley and Morgan.

Furthermore, students must believe in these standards and practice them until they become an integral part of their attitude toward collaborative efforts. As Mary Lay has stated, They tell us that we cannot teach successful collaboration. We can require collaboration, evaluate collaboration, and give students tools such as listening and questioning to aid cooperation. Effective collaboration depends on attitude--therefore, a change in attitude for many" ("The Metaphor of the Web" 74).

Team functions include daily matters or set rituals, but these functions also involve skills, strategies, and training. Team functions consist of decision making, communications, and conflict resolution. Teams can develop policy and procedures to facilitate team functions. Teachers can allow students to set deadlines and determine percentages for various parts of collaborative assignments; most important, they can encourage students to make choices and participate in problem solving without relying solely on the teacher. Teachers should allow students to make decisions, even though they may decide incorrectly, as long as students have valid reasons for their decisions (sometimes the valid reason may simply be that students are solving problems and, for their limited knowledge, their solution is valid).

If students violate appropriate behavior standards as discussed above or if students disagree about how to solve problems encountered, conflict will develop. Teachers should give students time to resolve their conflicts and not immediately intervene, unless difficulties develop that are beyond students' abilities to resolve.

To learn to develop policy and procedures to facilitate team functions, students can formulate a document process and document standards (style sheets or guides) for producing the document that will result from their collaboration (see The Professional Writer by Alred, Oliu, and Brusaw). Other names given to the document process include standard documentation process or SDP, Information Development or ID Process Checkpoints (IBM), Quality Documentation Process or QDP (NCR), or Document Development Methodology or DDM (Sandra Pakin and Associates). A simple version of a document process consists of the following stages: document need assessment, document analysis, research, document drafts, review and evaluation, editing, and production (Alred, Oliu, and Brusaw 21). Rather than formulating detailed document standards, students may decide to follow a standard style guide such as The Chicago Manual of Style or the Government Printing Office's Style Manual.

Team improvement is a result of training, education, and development; it determines how the team will continue to perform. Team members need training in hard skills, those directly relevant to the tasks they perform. They also need education that will provide strategies and a basis for them to advance to higher levels; education is often harder for adults because the relationship to their jobs is not immediately evident. Often adults won't put up with learning that they don't see as relevant. Though the knowledge may not seem directly related to job tasks, team members benefit from understanding group dynamics and how to deal with various types of group members.

Even though students in business communication classes usually believe in the benefits of the university education they are receiving, they may want what they are learning to clearly relate to their future career goals. They are frustrated with information they do not see as relevant to job tasks they will be asked to complete after graduation. Understanding total quality management and the collaborative environment that results makes them more receptive to learning how to be a good team member.

Team members may be concerned with only the knowledge they need to complete the business communication task assigned; they may not see relevance in cross training for a classroom collaborative project. They may not want to learn a task (writing effective business prose or using a word processing program to prepare the final document) if someone else on the team can perform that task well enough for the group to receive an "A." Similarly, they may not want to take time to teach another team member how to complete a task if they can do it themselves.

Some companies use Individual Development Plans (IDP's) as part of employee professional development and evaluation. For each year, or each evaluation period, employees with their supervisors formulate a set of goals that, when accomplished, will contribute to the employees' professional development and will serve as a basis for job evaluation. The goals are derived from job task requirements included in job descriptions, shared company vision, and employee ideas for professional development. Employees, for example, may be asked to complete computer seminars or learn on their own new computer software just purchased by their company, while employees may want to include courses in Spanish or Japanese to prepare themselves should the company expand into international markets.

Including IDP's as part of collaborative projects is a way to make sure that students participate in cross training. Those teaching and those learning are rewarded; the better a team member teaches and the more a team member learns, the higher the

grades. In IDP's, students list the skills they will learn and the ones they will teach. For any collaborative effort, students have common goals and individual goals. For example, all of the students writing an employee handbook would learn what information to include as well as how to format the text and any graphics used. However, one student who writes very well can help teach the others how to write effective instructions, while another student can increase their knowledge about using MicroSoft Word or Word Perfect to produce the handbook. In a classroom situation, teachers usually have more freedom in deciding how to group students in teams than does management in corporate structures. Teachers can determine the skills students have and then form teams, allowing for cross training.

Teams will improve as both individuals and the team develop. In an ideal situation, individual team members can evaluate themselves (self-assessment and self-evaluation with team support). A team leader or a facilitator can validate ("yes, you've assessed your performance correctly") or modify ("no, you're too hard on yourself" or "you're not seeing a certain weakness"). Management can help with team assessment as well. In classroom environments, peer review is a means of individual team members evaluating each other; students can write self-assessments, providing support for their evaluations; however, teachers normally must be the primary source of evaluation of individual and team performance.

Summary

Although collaboration (in relation to researching, learning, and communicating) has been an important topic of discussion at CCCC meetings, researchers have not fully used concepts from management, such as TQM, as a basis for the development of pedagogy in business communication classes. By learning about team building and cross training, students can prepare themselves for the corporate environments they will encounter upon graduation.

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Appendix 1

The Baldrige Award

1.0 Leadership (100 points**): Senior executive leadership, quality values, management for quality, and public responsibility.

2.0 Information and Analysis (70 points): Scope and management of quality data and information, competitive comparisons and benchmarks, and analysis of quality data and information.

3.0 Strategic quality planning (60 points): Strategic quality planning process, quality goals and plans.

4.0 Human resource utilization (150 points): Human resource management, employee involvement, quality education and training, employee recognition and performance measurement, and employee well-bei ıg and moral.

5.0 Quality assurance of products and services (140 points): Design and introduction of quality products and services, process quality control, continuous improvement of processes, quality assessment, documentation, business process and support service quality, and supplier quality.

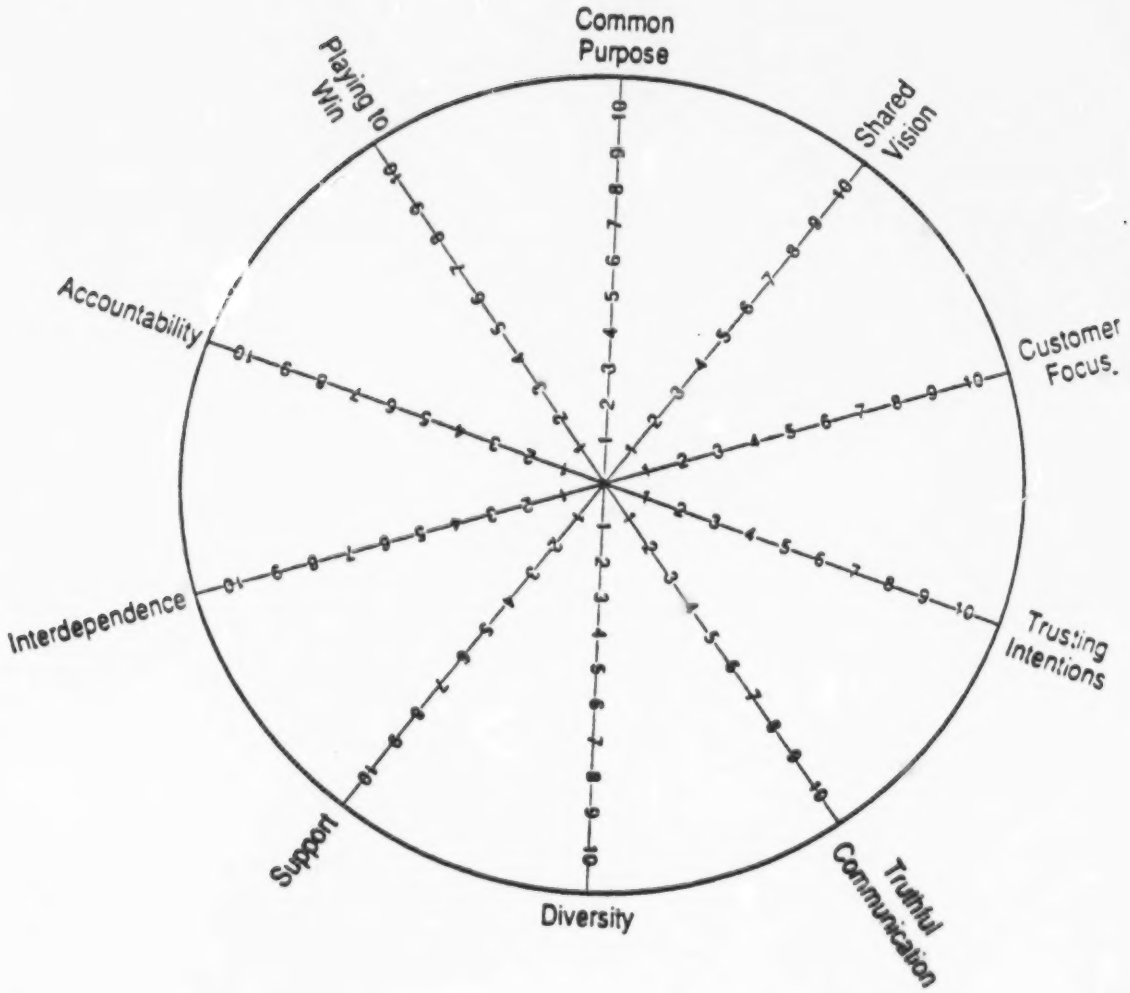
6.0 Quality results (180 points): product and service quality results; business process, operational, and support service quality results; and supplier quality results.

7.0 Customer satisfaction (300 points): Determining customer requirements and expectations, customer relationship management, customer service standards, commitment to customers, complaint resolution for quality improvement, determining customer satisfaction, customer satisfaction results, and customer satisfaction comparison.

** The total number of points possible is 1000.

Appendix 2

Team Master Profile
Spider Diagram



Appendix 3

TEAM PROCESSES

Team Improvement

Training
Education
Development

Team Charter

Team Management
Core Purpose
Behavior Standards

Team Functions

Decision Making
Communications
Conflict Resolution

Objectives